

WE CLAIM:

1. A computer-implemented method for maintaining a business relationship between a seller and a buyer, comprising the steps of:

a) providing a central database of information that contains disparate buyer data on a seller network;

5 b) establishing a buyer access level function on a seller network, wherein the buyer level function allows the seller to provide a buyer with access to a set of buyer data and a set of buyer functions for structuring the set of buyer data;

10 c) establishing a gatekeeper level function that allows the provision of a gatekeeper buyer contact point on a buyer network with the set of buyer data from the database and the set of buyer functions; and

d) establishing a buyer subordinate level user function that allows the provision of a buyer subordinate level user contact point that provides a buyer subordinate level user with access to selected buyer data from the set of buyer data and selected functions from the selected buyer functions at the buyer subordinate level user contact point.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the buyer is a plurality of buyers, each buyer having associated disparate buyer data.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the database contains predetermined seller data and buyer-specific data.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the buyer-specific data is information relating to the relationship and transactional occurrences between the seller and the buyer thereby defining an event between the seller and the buyer.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising the steps of:

e) selecting an event to be defined;

f) selecting corresponding selected buyer data for defining the event;

g) formatting the corresponding selected buyer data in a presentable report;

5 and

h) presenting the report to the buyer.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the buyer selects the event to be defined.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein, in step b), the set of buyer data and the set of buyer functions for structuring the set of buyer data includes reports generatable by a relationship framework functionality;

wherein, in step c), the set of buyer functions includes reports generatable by

5 the relationship framework functionality; and

wherein, in step d), the selected functions from the selected buyer functions includes reports generatable by the relationship framework functionality.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the central database is resident on the seller network and individual data fields are resident on various discrete seller computing systems that are in a networked relationship, such that the central database has access to the data stored in and available from each discrete seller computing system.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the central database includes relational tables resident on the seller network and associating each individual data field and each linked group of data fields.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

e) associating the disparate buyer data with the respective buyer through a common buyer link field, such that buyer-specific data is created via the common buyer link field.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the common buyer link field is a seller-assigned customer number.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the central database is updated on a real-time basis.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein the central database is updated on a periodic basis.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein the buyer is a corporate entity and the buyer subordinate level user is an employee of the corporate entity.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein the gatekeeper level function defines a gatekeeper role on the buyer network.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the gatekeeper is one of a seller system administrator, a buyer system administrator, and a buyer employee.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of the selected buyer functions is the ability to define a customized format in which the subordinate level user would like the selected buyer data to be presented.

18. The method of claim 1, wherein the buyer subordinate level user contact point is a personal computing machine networked with other personal computing machines on the buyer network.

19. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

e) creating a plurality of buyer subordinate level users; and

f) associating at least two of the buyer subordinate level users together, thereby defining a group including the at least two buyer subordinate level users.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the at least two buyer subordinate level users are associated by one of buyer subordinate level role, buyer subordinate level responsibility, buyer subordinate level location and buyer subordinate level title.

21. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

e) associating, by the buyer subordinate level user at the buyer subordinate level user contact point, a subset of the selected buyer data using the selected buyer functions.

22. The method of claim 21, further comprising the steps of:

f) contacting the central database on the seller network by the buyer subordinate level user at the buyer subordinate level user contact point;

5       g) gathering, by the central database, the most current subset of the selected buyer data;

h) routing the most current subset of the selected buyer data to the buyer subordinate level user at the buyer subordinate level user contact point.

23. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

e) modifying the selected buyer data for the buyer subordinate level user by the gatekeeper level function at the gatekeeper buyer contact point on the buyer network.

24. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

e) modifying the selected buyer functions for the buyer subordinate level user by the gatekeeper level function at the gatekeeper buyer contact point on the buyer network.

25. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

e) restricting, by the buyer subordinate level user at the buyer subordinate level user contact point, a subset of the selected buyer data using the selected buyer functions.

26. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

e) presenting the selected buyer data and selected buyer functions to the buyer subordinate level user at the buyer subordinate level user contact point.

27. The method of claim 1, wherein steps b) - d) are completed in a discrete period of time.

28. The method of claim 24, wherein the discrete period of time is in the range of about 1 minute to about 10 minutes.

29. An apparatus capable of performing the method according to claim 1.

30. A computer-implemented method for maintaining a business relationship between a first entity and a second entity, comprising the steps of:

a) providing a central database of information that contains disparate second entity data on a first entity network;

5                   b) establishing a second entity access level function on a first entity network, wherein the second entity level function allows the first entity to provide a second entity with access to a set of second entity data and a set of second entity functions for structuring the set of second entity data;

10                  c) establishing a gatekeeper level function that provides access at a gatekeeper second entity contact point on a second entity network to the set of second entity data from the database and the set of second entity functions; and

15                  d) establishing a second entity subordinate level user function at a second entity subordinate level user contact point that provides a second entity subordinate level user with access to selected second entity data from the set of second entity data and selected functions from the selected second entity functions at the second entity subordinate level user contact point.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein the second entity is a plurality of second entities, each second entity having associated disparate second entity data.

32. A computer-implemented method for maintaining a business relationship between a seller and a buyer, comprising the steps of:

a) providing a central database of information that contains disparate buyer data on a seller network;

5                  b) establishing a buyer access level function on a seller network, wherein the buyer level function allows the seller to provide a buyer with access to a set of buyer data and a set of buyer functions for structuring the set of buyer data, wherein the set of buyer data and the set of buyer functions for structuring the set of buyer data includes reports generatable by a relationship framework functionality comprising (1) a report relationship structure module field that defines generic features of events that are expected to occur in a relationship between a buyer and seller, and (2) at least one database, electronically connected to the report relationship structure module field for providing content for defining specific features of a specific event that actually occurs between a buyer and a seller;

10                  c) establishing a gatekeeper level function that allows the provision of a gatekeeper buyer contact point on a buyer network to the set of buyer data from the database and the set of buyer functions, including reports generatable by the relationship framework functionality; and

20                   d) establishing a buyer subordinate level user function that allows the provision of a buyer subordinate level user contact point that provides a buyer subordinate level user with access to selected buyer data from the set of buyer data and selected functions from the selected buyer functions at the buyer subordinate level user contact point, including reports generatable by the relationship framework functionality.

33. The method of claim 32, wherein the buyer is a plurality of buyers, each buyer having associated disparate buyer data.

34. The method of claim 32, further comprising the step of:

e) associating the disparate buyer data with the respective buyer through a common buyer link field, such that buyer-specific data is created via the common buyer link field.

35. The method of claim 32, wherein the central database includes relational tables resident on the seller network and associating each individual data field and each linked group of data fields.

36. The method of claim 32, wherein the central database contains predetermined seller data and buyer-specific data, wherein the buyer-specific data is information relating to the relationship and transactional occurrences between the seller and the buyer thereby defining an event between the seller and the buyer.